

have voted "aye" on rollcall Nos. 474, 475, 476, and 477. I would have voted "no" on rollcall No. 478.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

#### OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION ACT

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5313) to reserve a small percentage of the amounts made available to the Secretary of Agriculture for the farmland protection program to fund challenge grants to encourage the purchase of conservation easements and other interests in land to be held by a State agency, county, or other eligible entity, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5313

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act".

#### SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL TITLE-HOLDING OPTION UNDER FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM.

(a) ADDITIONAL TITLE-HOLDING OPTION; RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section 1238I of the Farm Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3838i) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d) OPTION FOR TITLE TO BE HELD BY ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—

"(1) RESERVATION OF FUNDS; PURPOSE.—Of the funds made available under section 1241(a)(4) for a fiscal year to carry out this section, the Secretary shall reserve not less than 15 percent to make grants to support cooperative efforts by an eligible State agency, a county, and one or more other eligible entities to purchase conservation easements and other interests in eligible land under subsection (a), the title to which will be held by an eligible entity rather than the United States.

"(2) COST SHARING.—Notwithstanding subsection (c)(1), the share of the cost of purchasing a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land borne by the United States under this subsection shall not exceed 25 percent. The State agency involved in the purchase shall contribute 25 percent of the purchase price, the county involved in the purchase shall contribute 25 percent of the purchase price, and the other eligible entities involved in the purchase shall contribute 25 percent of the purchase price.

"(3) PROHIBITION ON USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—Federal funds made available under this subsection may not be used by grant recipients for administrative purposes."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on October 1, 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, urban sprawl continues to threaten the Nation's farmland. Social and economic changes over the past three decades have influenced the rate at which land is converted to nonagricultural uses. Population growth, demographic changes, preferences for larger lots, expansion of transportation systems, and economic prosperity have contributed to increases in agricultural land conversion rates.

The amount of farmland lost to development is not the only significant concern. Another cause for concern is the quality and pattern of farmland being converted. In most States, prime farmland is being converted at two to four times the rate of other, less-productive agricultural land.

There continues to be an important national interest in the protection of farmland. Land use devoted to agriculture provides an important contribution to meeting the Nation's food and fiber needs, environmental quality, protection of the Nation's historical and archeological resources and scenic beauty.

The farmland protection program is administered by NRCS and provides funds to State, tribal, and local governments and nongovernmental organizations to help them purchase conservation easements from willing sellers to limit conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

The farmland protection program has received funding applications for 300 percent more dollars than the program was appropriated. The result in fiscal year 2005 was \$262 million in unfunded projects. There simply weren't enough Federal dollars to match the number of applications to preserve farmland.

H.R. 5313, the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Challenge Grant Act, was introduced to aid in reducing the number of unfunded projects. Currently, the farmland protection program provides up to a 50 percent Federal match on these easement projects. By lowering the Federal match on a small portion of farmland protection program funding, we believe that less Federal funds can be used to protect more land.

The bill before us today, H.R. 5313, amends the Farm Security Act of 1985 to set aside 15 percent of farmland protection funds for cost-share grants, 25 percent maximum Federal share, to support eligible State agencies, county, and one or more eligible entities, local government or private entities, to purchase conservation easements.

This bill allows Federal dollars to go further by lowering the Federal match fund to a maximum of 25 percent and allowing other entities to make up the

other 75 percent. States where the State, county, and local grassroots effort is strong can make better use of increasingly limited dollars. For example, Pennsylvania, which has great grassroots efforts to protect farmland, had the most unfunded easement applications, 65 for fiscal year 2005, which accounted for 6,200 acres not being able to be put into this program. By being able to use these reserved funds, more acres, with help from more groups, can be protected.

There is no new spending authorized in this bill. It simply creates a set-aside out of existing Federal farmland protection dollars. Any funds not used will go back into the general disbursement of farmland protection funds.

Madam Speaker, obviously, it is in this country's best interests to protect some of its great farmland. This program is immensely popular in many States, proven by the numbers of applications for the program each year. States like Connecticut, with \$14 million in projects that could not be funded; Maryland had \$17 million; Michigan, \$22 million; New Hampshire, \$15 million; Ohio, \$12 million; and Pennsylvania, \$20 million. This bill gives States that have tremendous grassroots organizations the ability to protect more farmland with less Federal money.

I would like to thank the ranking member of the committee, Congressman PETERSON, for working with us on this matter, as well as Congressman GERLACH, who introduced the measure, and Congressman TIM HOLDEN, a member of the committee, from Pennsylvania, who has legislation addressing this issue.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, the farmland protection program is an important program that helps farmers preserve their land for the future and to combat urban sprawl.

The program works with State and local groups to purchase conservation easements to ensure farmland is kept continually in agricultural use for future generations.

I want to thank the chairman for recognizing the importance of preserving open space and hope that we can continue to work together to strengthen the Federal program in the next farm bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH) 3 minutes.

Mr. GERLACH. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5313, the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act, a bill I introduced to strengthen the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Under the bill, 15 percent of the funds made available for the program would be reserved in order to make challenge

grants available to preserve the most threatened farmland, farmland in States, counties, municipalities, or private entities all agree are vital to preserve.

Simply put, if a State contributes 25 percent, a county contributes 25 percent, and a municipality or private entity contributes 25 percent towards the preservation of eligible farmland, the effort would then be eligible for a 25 percent Federal match.

I know that every, State, county, and municipality's commitment to farmland preservation is different, but it is my hope that creating this challenge grant will encourage more efforts at these levels of government.

States like Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania's counties and municipalities have invested heavily in preserving farmland. The challenge grant created through H.R. 5313 would only help to encourage other States in more local municipalities to follow this example and compete for Federal dollars available through the challenge grant.

I also believe that this challenge grant will steer Federal resources towards those projects already getting wide support from counties, States, and municipalities, or private organizations. This ensures that the increasingly limited Federal resources are being used to preserve the most threatened farmland.

This is an important measure that will help preserve farmland and open space in suburban and exurban communities. For residents of these areas like my constituents in Pennsylvania's Sixth Congressional District, preservation of open space and farmland is a quality of life issue that can not be overlooked.

I want to thank Chairman GOODLATTE and his staff for their efforts in bringing this bill to the floor today, as well as the efforts of Ranking Member PETERSON. I would also like to thank my colleague, Congressman MARK KIRK of Illinois, for his foresight and leadership in the creation of the Suburban Agenda Caucus. His efforts and the efforts of the leaders of the Caucus have helped shed light on the issues that those of us in the suburban communities care deeply about.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5313, the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, at this time, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, I want to thank Congressman JIM GERLACH for his leadership for the entire Nation in protecting suburban green and open space.

Now, we all support the National Park System, and I believe the next President should set a goal of doubling the National Park System. But we also need to take action to protect more green and open space near home.

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Without this bill, more green and open space would disappear in an unending series of strip malls. In my own district, we just set aside 77 acres of Lake Michigan shoreline as part of a new park to preserve habitat for all time. But we need to do more.

Under Congressman GERLACH's leadership, this bill became part of our bipartisan suburban agenda to meet the education, health care, conservation and economic needs of suburban families. This bill advances those needs by making sure that we preserve more green and open space in the suburbs.

In my own State of Illinois, we are losing over 41,000 acres of farmland to development, 71 percent in suburban areas. The rate of farmland loss in our State has increased over 130 percent in the 1990s. This bill directly meets that need, and I want to thank Chairman GOODLATTE for moving this legislation that makes sure that suburban families have more green and open space near home.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5313.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill just considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

#### PROVIDING FOR CONVEYANCE OF FORMER KONNAROCK LUTHERAN GIRLS SCHOOL IN SMYTH COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5103) to provide for the conveyance of the former Konnarock Lutheran Girls School in Smyth County, Virginia, which is currently owned by the United States and administered by the Forest Service, to facilitate the restoration and reuse of the property, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5103

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. LAND CONVEYANCE, FORMER KONNAROCK LUTHERAN GIRLS SCHOOL, JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST, SMYTH COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

(a) CONVEYANCE REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall convey, without consid-

eration, to the Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia (in this section referred to as the "recipient") all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to a parcel of real property in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Smyth County, Virginia, located in the vicinity of the junction of Virginia Routes 600 and 603, consisting of not more than six acres, and containing the former Konnarock Lutheran Girls School and its outbuildings, as depicted on the map entitled "Proposed Area for New Legislation or Sale—Konnarock School—Being a Portion of USA Tract J-935".

(b) CONDITION OF CONVEYANCE.—The conveyance under subsection (a) shall be subject to the condition that the recipient accept the real property described in such subsection in its condition at the time of the conveyance, commonly known as conveyance "as is".

(c) DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY.—Subject to the acreage limitation specified in subsection (a), the exact acreage and legal description of the real property to be conveyed under such subsection shall be determined by a survey satisfactory to the Secretary. The cost of the survey shall be borne by the recipient.

(d) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The Secretary may require such additional terms and conditions in connection with the conveyance under subsection (a) as the Secretary considers appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5103, a bill to provide for the conveyance of the former Konnarock Lutheran Girls School in Smyth County, Virginia. The Konnarock property is located in Representative RICK BOUCHER's congressional district, just south of my district in the southwestern part of Virginia. The land and buildings were acquired by the Forest Service in 1967. The facility, at that time, was not in use. It was last used as a school in 1959.

The Forest Service used the buildings to house fire crews and summer trail crews, as well as the job corps operations. By the early 1980s, continued deterioration rendered the facility unusable. There has been considerable continued deterioration since that time. The facility is now in severe disrepair.

Prior to Forest Service acquisition, the facility was owned by the local Lutheran Church. This legislation would convey the land to the Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for the mission in Appalachia, which plans to restore/preserve the historic structures; develop a retreat center; partner with area colleges to use the property as an environmental learning center; and develop, archive, and exhibit the history of the school and the community.

This bill was passed by the House Committee on Agriculture favorably last week with the recommendation